

The Fashion Show as a Festival of *Gesamtkunstwerk*

Leszek Sosnowski*

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Abstract

Fashion affects all areas of individual and social life, transcending mere clothing. Hence it can serve as the subject of technical, historical, artistic, and philosophical reflection. The subject of the present paper encompasses the philosophy and aesthetics of a fashion show – especially several of Karl Lagerfeld's last projects, which can be treated as total works of art uniting several different artistic fields within their frameworks. The idea of a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a total work of art, is applied nowadays to almost every multimedia phenomenon. Such widespread use of this term seems arbitrary; nevertheless, all works related to multimedia pop culture can be called total works of art. This applies to music concerts from the 1960s, such as those of the Beatles, and contemporary theater and music performances, such as those of Lady Gaga.

Keywords: Karl Lagerfeld; Fashion Show; Festival; Work of Art; *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

* Jagiellonian University in Kraków (Poland); ✉ leszek.sosnowski@uj.edu.pl

Historical outline

Change as a feature of fashion appeared early, albeit in an extreme form. Nature gave Marie Antoinette, Queen of France, looks no better than those of a villager. These regrettable oversights of nature were improved by changes in clothing and hairstyle.¹ The queen made a great commitment to supplementing nature, becoming a fashion follower and exciting the ladies of Paris with the richness of her royal dresses and her rapidity in changing them.² These sophisticated needs were supplied by Mlle. Marie-Jeanne Rose Bertin, who became a fashion dictator. Twice a week in private meetings, Bertin presented the queen with drawings of new dresses and equally bold accessories. Every day, she invented fashions more bizarre than those of the previous day. The queen had hundreds of dresses, many of which she wore only once.³ The richness of her costumes and the speed with which she changed them led to the despair of court ladies and the ruin of their husbands. The combination of fashion with wealth, though never dominant, is still present in Western society. Extravagance is still an independent value, marking the most fashionable people. Twentieth-century successors to Mlle. Bertin became artists, combining the needs of women with their own individual style and art.

In the twentieth century, trends and patterns in fashion were distinguished and closely related to art. In the background was the fashion designer's desire to impose his own style and dominate the taste of the audience. The condition for such domination was the manifold appearance of novelty, always an element of elegance. The fashion house, in replacing the royal court, began to dress the ladies of the salon. At the beginning of the century there were many innovations: skirt-pants (jupes-culottes, Poirer), the "tomboy" style (Marguerite and Patou), "blue Patou" (Patou), the modeling of creations on the model (Vionnet), "the little black dress" (Chanel). Art became the inspiration for fashion; the designers turned to the work of illustrious artists such as Léger, Braque, Picasso, Erté, and García-Benito. In later decades, these designers were replaced by fashion artists, creating art that was independent of fashion.

The next major qualitative change occurred in the second half of the twentieth century. All who became part of fashion history were innovative artists. Their creativity manifested itself in various fields and aspects of fashion, presenting new colors, outfits, styles, or brands. Briefly, these included "stretch" clothing (Azzedine Alaïa), simplification of clothing (Coco Chanel), the color "Rosso di Valentino" (Valentino Garavani), the brand "Comme des garçons" (Rei Kawakubo), designer jeans (Calvin Klein), luxury "country" style (Ralph Lauren), hip pants (Alexander McQueen), the brand "Pleats Please" (Issey Miyake), the style "Cheap and Chic" (Franco Moschino), the psychedelic style (Ottavio Missoni), the "Mondrian Dress" (Yves Saint Laurent), and punk style (Vivienne Westwood). Great designers were distinguished by their innovative approach to dressing men and women, creating original designs, e.g., the "power look" (Giorgio Armani), the "new look" (Christian Dior), "controlled femininity" (Miuccia Prada), emphasis on the new feminine silhouette (Yves Saint Laurent), and male sex appeal (Calvin Klein).

It is also worth noting that contemporary designers took their inspiration from various cultural areas, both near and remote, e.g., from Sicilian folklore and the culture of the Apennine Peninsula (Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana), history and distant travels (John Galiano), English and American culture (Ralph Lauren), the world of wild animals and futuristic monsters (Alexander McQueen), and the Calabria and ancient Greek motifs found there (Gianni Versace). The imagination of the designers and the artistry of their achievements meant that they were semantically elevated above commonness, gaining designations such as "the king of fit" (Alaïa), "the emperor of fashion" (Karl Lagerfeld), the guru of elegance, including casual elegance (Giorgio Armani), and the canon of classical elegance (Chanel). In describing the proposals of this aristocracy of fashion art, various terms were used, such as *hippie fashion*,

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1. Helga Möbius, *Woman of the Baroque Age* (New York: Abner Schram, 1982).
 2. Antal Szerb, *The Queen's Necklace* (London: Pushkin Press, 2013). The author states that his book is not a novel but the true story of the sensational scandal involving a diamond necklace in which the queen herself and other historical figures took part. For us it is important that the book is a source of rich information about the French court, and therefore about the intrigues, ambitions, pernicious passions, and, above all, the fashion of the aristocracy of that time.
 3. Stefan Zweig, *Marie Antoinette: The Portrait of an Average Woman* (New York: Viking Press, 1933).

ironic, psychedelic, retro, shocking, sophisticated, anti-fashion, or post-atomic fashion. All of these terms refer directly to various aspects of design originality.

Design changes were also followed by changes in the presentation of collections. Individual fashion shows took on the character of festivals, in which elements of various arts began to appear, though subordinated to the main goal, i.e., the presentation of the fashion collection. The celebration of clothing was also intensified by stagecraft, lighting, sound, or natural open air. All designers, whether better- or lesser-known, exploited these elements, but among them several in particular were distinguished by their sophisticated artistic framework. Lagerfeld and McQueen were the masters here. Particularly noteworthy is the former, who elevated the fashion show to the rank of art, with certain unique features. Lagerfeld skillfully combined various areas of art in his shows, creating works of a higher order. This constituted an original synthesis of arts, which, without hesitation, I give the name of the well-known concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, i.e., holistic, total art. What are its distinguishing characteristics?

The Idea of *Gesamtkunstwerk*

An exhibition titled *Der Hang zum Gesamtkunstwerk. Europäische Utopien seit 1800*, organized in 1983 in Zurich, tells us a great deal about the artistic potential of this idea and its relevance and importance for the art (or culture) of the twentieth century. Its curator, Harald Szeemann, took, as a point of departure, the concept of Richard Wagner, which the authors of the catalog extended to its previous and subsequent theoretical and practical implementations in Europe. If we turn now to this exhibition and its philosophical description, it is because of the multitude and variety of examples of total art contained in the relevant catalog. In referring the reader to the details contained therein, I wish to recall selected main groups of examples: namely, architectural designs and their realizations, stage and theater designs, and paintings and works of music.

The first group includes the following proposals: a cenotaph for Isaac Newton by Étienne-Louis Boulée, Neuschwanstein Castle by Ludwig II of Bavaria, Sagrada Familia by Antoni Gaudí, the Goetheanum in Dornach by Rudolf Steiner, an artists' colony in Darmstadt by Peter Behrens, and designs by Bruno Taut. The second group includes the designs of Karl Friedrich Schinkel for Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Magic Flute* and the designs of Walter Gropius. The third group includes works such as *Morning* by Philip Otto Runge and works by Italian futurists, Wassily Kandinsky, Marcel Duchamp, Kurt Schwitters, Dadaists, Joseph Beuys, Marcel Broodthaers, Hermann Nitsch, and Anselm Kiefer. The final group included the musical works of Wagner, Alexander Scriabin, Arnold Schönberg, Erik Satie, and John Cage. If this extensive list of artists evokes no surprise, then the inclusion in this collection of Johann Georg Sulzer and his concept of moralistic aesthetics, and Charles Fourier and his social utopia, will surely do so.⁴

In expanding the horizons of thinking about total art, Szeemann opened a path to a understanding of art so broad that it may lead to a loss of specificity.⁵ However, he had grounds for this. It will suffice to recall the artistic achievements of the first half of the twentieth century, in which the boundaries of individual arts were transcended and distant fields merged. Philip Ursprung did not simply support Szeemann's broad classification, but indeed stated that, while Wagner's pathos may be passé, the significance of *Gesamtkunstwerk* has actually never waned.⁶ The perspective of one hundred and fifty years permits such a statement, because it can be seen clearly the extent of the areas that this idea has taken over. This means that the potential of this idea was much greater than Wagner, its initiator and chief promoter, may have originally guessed. Therefore, it is necessary to return to the source and present the

4. Susanne Häni and Harald Szeemann, ed., *Der Hang zum Gesamtkunstwerk. Europäische Utopien seit 1800* (Aarau/Frankfurt a. M.: Verlag Sauerländer, 1983).

5. See David Roberts, *The Total Work of Art in European Modernism* (New York: Ithaca, 2011). The author treats the concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk* as an important utopia of modern culture, including the French Revolution and 20th-century totalitarianisms: Stalinism and Hitlerism.

6. Philip Ursprung, "What Happened to the *Gesamtkunstwerk*? The Love-Hate Relationship between Art and Architecture," in *Two Minds: Artists and Architects in Collaboration*, ed. J. Fernie, (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2006), 18.

philosophical assumptions of Wagner's concept, which will enable us to move on to the philosophical foundations of fashion as the implementation of the concept of total art.

Wagner presented postulates regarding the role of art in shaping a new human being in three of his essays: *Art and Revolution*, *The Artwork of the Future*, and *Opera and Drama*. In the last of these he considered himself specially appointed to fulfill the mission of restoring artistic truth to art. This transformation was to be accomplished by musical drama combining music, a literary text, stage movement, stagecraft and, importantly, socio-national utopianism.⁷ In comparison with the canons of the time, Wagner made important changes in his musical drama. He subordinated music, words, and stagecraft to the process of action in the dramatic work. Thus, he rejected divisions into arias, duets, recitatives, etc., so that the work consisted only of scenes and acts according to the schema of the dramatic arrangement. He assigned an important role to the so-called *Leitmottiv*, a musical theme that serves as a reflection of a character's feelings or of natural phenomena. These motifs appear throughout each of his musical dramas. Unending melody also plays a particular role, causing Wagner's works to take on a timeless character. For the present, it is important that this realization of the idea of musical drama became a pure exemplification of *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

Lagerfeld as a Work of Art

In subsequent remarks, I will limit myself to the creative fashion work of Lagerfeld as a unique and exemplary figure representing the activities of contemporary fashion designers. His shows from the last few years merit special attention and profound reflection. Lagerfeld created his designs with a flourish, and each of his collections was given an original stage arrangement. The shows of Chanel corrections which he directed during French Fashion Week at the Grand Palais were the most important events of the season. To meet the needs of his shows, Lagerfeld created a Renaissance palace, a supermarket, a brasserie, a casino, an airport, a park, and an art gallery, or simply used natural surroundings. Until the last years of his life, he charmed and surprised the recipients with the freedom of his imagination.

During the show of his Autumn/Winter 2017 collection, Lagerfeld surprised the audience by transforming the French Grand Palais into a space flight center. A space shuttle with the Chanel logo was placed in the glass exhibition hall. The staging was supported by the launch of the rocket in the final stage of the show. During the Autumn/Winter 2018 *haute couture* show, Lagerfeld transformed the Grand Palais into an autumnal park. The collection was created in the colors of foliage typical of the autumn season, resulting in an atmospherically unique presentation. During the 2018-19 Cruise Show at the Grand Palais, the designer became the captain of the cruise ship *La Pausa*, exploiting a play on words: the name of the ship referred the audience to Coco Chanel's summer house on the Cote d'Azur, but also, plausibly, to Lagerfeld himself from his boyhood period of boat trips around the island of Sylt. The close of the artist's creative period, in a literal and symbolic sense, was the final Spring/Summer 2019 show prior to his death, which Lagerfeld organized on one of the beaches of the Cote d'Azur, where models walked barefoot on the sand along the water's edge. This inspiration appears comprehensible: at the end of his life, Lagerfeld returned to the days of his childhood, to holidays spent on the above-mentioned island of Sylt in the North Sea. Spectacular scenography, original collections, glamor, and extravagance, in tandem with the maintenance of situational realism, was his hallmark.

In subsequent remarks I will limit myself to the show of the Chanel Spring/Summer 2016 collection as an example of Lagerfeld's creative approach. However, it is worth remembering that the motive of aviation in general, with the symbolic meanings of travel, flying, open space, and sky, referring us to creative, uninhibited imagination, were very dear to Lagerfeld. In an interview with journalist Jefferson Hack for the magazine *Dazed*, he humorously justified this interest in his work: "I don't star in movies, I am not a famous singer. I have no scandal and yet I cannot go out in public because they all want to

7. Wagner presented his idea of the opera as *Gesamtkunstwerk* in his essay *The Artwork of the Future*, written in 1849.

take my picture, so it's almost impossible for me to travel through airports.”⁸ Greatness and celebrity mean certain limitations, but also the power to bring your intentions to life.

In 2008, Lagerfeld organized a Cruise Show in an aircraft hangar in Santa Monica, California, using two Chanel Line jets. In 2012, he presented his show in a full-size replica of an Airbus A380 airplane. And finally, for the needs of the Chanel Spring/Summer 2016 collection show, Lagerfeld turned the French market hall at Grand Palais into an airport called “Paris Cambon,” where the intensive and competent work of the Chanel team was in progress. He carefully designed and decorated the huge space of the air terminal, accounting for the most trivial details typical of the place and its functions. There was no doubt that the show concerned the Chanel Airlines brand, as the famous Chanel logo was present on all accessories, supported by the printed motif of the aircraft. Lagerfeld, also a deep conceptual artist, could not omit numerous references to the life story of Gabrielle “Coco” Chanel. The name of the airport was a direct reference to the store that Chanel had opened in 1910 on rue Cambon in Paris, while the 2C terminal was named in honor of the trademark of her fashion house; finally, the entrance to the airport, Gate No. 5, was a reference to Chanel’s lucky number. As a side note, it is worth adding that the designer allowed photographers to take pictures of him against the background of this entrance.

Inside the terminal were passenger service desks; boarding passes served as invitations; guests were checked in at the Chanel Airlines passport and ticket booths. There were typical metal airport chairs, which, to the pleasant surprise of “guest travelers,” contained presents from Chanel; moreover, there were luggage trolleys, full-service luggage drop-off desks, bilingual gate signs in French and English, and, of course, flight attendants and models as passengers. Above the terminal, at its central point, was a board, listing, instead of the arrivals and departures of flights of Chanel Airlines aircraft, information about earlier Lagerfeld shows. Lagerfeld himself supervised the whole event like the captain of an airplane, ready to take off at any moment to an unknown port of the imagination.

There was lively traffic in the terminal; at the counters, agents dressed like models served passengers, likewise dressed like models, travelling with “Coco Case” model suitcases. Some of them froze for a moment to check their time of departure or arrival on the information board, while others walked firmly and surely towards destinations known only to themselves. All were characterized by the elegance and comfort of their outfits, combined with the style and functionality of their accessories. Clothing and accessories contained a palette of colors, including blue, white, black, and metallic gray. The Spring/Summer 2016 collection included ninety-nine different styles of skirts, dresses, costumes, pants, and overalls. The audience admired the show, enjoying the clothes of the ground and air service employees and passengers moving around discreetly in the white departure hall. Style and comfort, durability and functionality at your fingertips, serving in this and all subsequent journeys with Chanel. To paraphrase Lagerfeld’s own words, it could be said that Chanel “is a kind of place for a takeoff to all kinds of directions and all kinds of situations.”⁹

Fashion Show as *Gesamtkunstwerk*

The theory and philosophy of *Gesamtkunstwerk* is relatively well developed. In it, attention is drawn to either its artistic-aesthetic or its artistic-utopian aspect. A work of total art combines various fields of artistic creativity, such as architecture, painting, music, poetry, dance, theater, and even a socio-utopian element. The connection is neither arbitrary nor merely illustrative, because the compositional elements complement each other and, moreover, expand their structure to the outside world. Odo Marquard said that *Gesamtkunstwerk* tends to eliminate the boundary between aesthetic structure and reality.¹⁰ Viewed superficially, it seems that fashion — especially the fashion show — falls within the category of

8. Ted Stansfield, “Chanel Gets Ready For Take-Off with Airport-Themed Show,” *Dazed* (October 6, 2015), <https://www.dazeddigital.com/fashion/article/26881/1/chanel-gets-ready-for-take-off-with-airport-themed-show>.

9. Susannah Franke, *An Other* (<https://www.anothermag.com/fashion-beauty/7897/the-intricacies-of-chanel-airlines>).

10. See Odo Marquard, “Gesamtkunstwerk und Identitätssystem,” in *Der Hang zum Gesamtkunstwerk*, 40–9.

total art. To be sure, however, we need to consider the features of these shows before explicitly classifying them.

Lagerfeld was a master of serious artistic creativity as well as equally serious play with meanings and cultural codes. In his projects and shows he used metaphors and symbols, strengthening the artistic message of the collection and making each show unique and one of a kind. The shows made use of traditional fashion elements, such as the form and color of dresses and their combination with accessories such as footwear, handbags, and suitcases. The message was further enriched by additional — though still classic in the fashion world — elements which created a permanent link with fashion shows, such as the visual and performing arts. Lagerfeld did not stop here, however. The designer introduced non-obvious, often surprising elements to the show. Following a sentimental impulse, he recreated the past and at the same time, as part of a visionary premonition, designed the future. In each case, permanent architecture was present, forming an important background for the show into which small architectural elements were introduced for the show's duration, as an expression of the scenic arrangement of space. It is precisely this which testifies to the artist's creative potential.

In the Chanel Spring/Summer 2016 show of interest here, the viewer was presented with the ubiquitous symbolism of travel. The fashion show can be read through various semiotic functions, along with their respective semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic relationships. These last are particularly interesting because they include inquiries in the fields of psychology, sociology, and cultural studies, expressed in thoughts and generalized philosophical conclusions. A journey requires specific preparation in all of the three following aspects: individual psychology, social behavior, and familiarity with cultural norms. For the traveler, comfortable clothing, properly selected luggage, and accessories that create well-being are important. All of these elements determine the quality of travel, which constitutes time differentiated from everyday life. The entire travel set is supposed to be functional, although not devoid of chic. Therefore, viewers saw before them elegant splendor, bearing the hallmarks of freedom resulting from the artistic form, but also signs of enslavement resulting from the form of the festival. The premeditated perfection of art was mixed here with the spontaneous joy of the festival. The fashion show, as a performative work created here and now, fed on the atmosphere it created.

A fashion show is a multielement and multidimensional event, complete with its main actors, who are models, with their specific dance of presentation, and the most important element, the collection of costumes being presented. This event is also created by the elements accompanying the show, such as music, light, the stage, and the colors of fashion designs. All of them “play” with their values, enriching the architecture and stage design. In presenting his designs, Lagerfeld was never limited by specific spatial conditions. The space of the Grand Palais, an exhibition hall built in 1900, thus became a cosmic port, a seaport, and finally an airport. “Why can't I turn a fashion brand into an airline brand? It costs nothing but creativity!” said Lagerfeld. It is clear that, apart from the artist's imagination, the show was a challenge in terms of design, engineering, and direction. As a result, a complex work of art was created, which encompassed specific fields of art as well as events and artistic activities. In Lagerfeld's case, the fashion show had neither formal, nor, as it turned out, material or design-related restrictions. His show combined elements of traditional arts, such as theatrical performances or philharmonic concerts, but also undoubtedly embraced the latest artistic forms, such as happenings, performances, or site-specific art.

A fashion show under the direction of Lagerfeld was a spectacle that, *de facto*, eluded simple classification because it did not belong entirely to any particular field. Given its designed and organized character, the artistic phenomenon closest to a Lagerfeld show is the happening. The fashion show as an artistic event is a work written for many voices and many performers, even though its creator is one artist, not a group of artists representing various fields of art. The show contains many definitional elements of the happening, such as specific dramaturgy with logical narration, a system of signs pointing to one another, formal openness despite the designed course, the use of specially prepared objects that become part of the show's action, a connection with the nature of the place, less visible in enclosed spaces but completely clear in natural spaces, such as a seaside beach. In both types of shows, whether performed in a cultural or a natural landscape, it is possible to speak of site-specific art. The purpose here is also to

strengthen or discover inherent meanings in space.

Lagerfeld was a theatrical director and conductor as well as a creative and organizational director. He created works that were complex in the sense of the coexistence of arts, each of which gained an equal role in the whole. Therefore, his fashion shows as comprehensive works of art constitute an organic unity and, as such, refer the recipient to the idea of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a work of total art. The artist's designs were perceived not through a common symbolic and metaphysical idea, as was the case with Wagner, but through artistic and aesthetic synesthesia. This difference is fundamental. Wagner's work was an expression of a socio-religious utopia of the spirit, which, through its unity, referred the viewer to symbolism and sacredness. A work of fashion art refers not to a utopian spirit, but to the power of intellect. In this sense, it is more of a science-fiction utopia in a positive sense, in which science is subordinated to the imagination, and which is in fact an artistic vision, though not devoid of practical values. All elements of such a work form an "organic unity," thanks to which its structure is characterized by a "centripetal orientation." No element or part serves a third, external purpose. This is the structure of the work of art; as such, it is governed by the principle of "purposefulness without purpose," despite its obvious potential for the assignment of external functionalities.

The Fashion Show as a Festival

Within the holistic approach to fashion there is one fragment that constitutes a celebration of fashion and is associated with a special occasion. Fashion, in the sense of wearing clothes, is a part of everyday life. However, a fashion show, i.e., the presentation of a new collection, is different. The time of the show is a special time, one that bears all the hallmarks of a festival.¹¹ What is a festival in general? It is exaltation, anticipated perfection, which undermines, invalidates, and denies everyday life. For a brief moment, this perfection is present, thanks to which life takes on glamour and a higher sense. Fashion enables the transcendence of everyday life (though not in a religious sense), to which the sublimity of the celebration lends uniqueness.

The festival of fashion results from two elements present at this event: its elevated course and the mood of its audience. Both elements reside entirely within the framework of featured and perfected time and exert a reciprocal influence on each other. These elements — the featured time, the exceptional event, and the selected audience — are brought together, conditioning, reinforcing, and creating a unique and perfect situation. The meeting of these elements results in an objective sense of fashion, which obtains its momentary fulfillment thanks to the highest act of affirmation at the gala event. This sense depends on the type of gala from which it arises and which reflects its wealth or poverty. At the same time, this sense does not transcend the natural limitations of this event; it does not enhance the intensity and festivity of everyday life. This is a case of two independent worlds which do not influence each other.

The fashion show festival, as the presentation of a new collection, is an event that unites the designer and the viewer into a single whole, bonded by the expectation of what is going to happen. In this update, fashion gains sublimity and fulfillment, as can be clearly seen against the background of everyday existence, which continues unaffected. The show is an affirmation of fashion, a temporary suspension of change, which is its essential property. The show suspends the current fashion style, invalidating it by its conclusion. From this moment a new era of a new style begins. The seriousness of the holiday gives it its binding force.

The celebration of fashion is a festival, and a festival is art. Lagerfeld strengthened this feeling of a festival, skillfully using the symbolism of colors by means of which the feminine wardrobe, functional accessories, and informational prints and stickers speak. Lagerfeld mixed blue, white, black, and shades thereof, strengthened and weakened by the constant light of the surroundings and changing information boards, in a game of cultural codes and archetypal associations. In this brilliant world, the artist left the fingerprints of artistry on all elements of the show. Nothing was accidental: a ticket that was not a ticket, a journey that was not a journey, flight attendants who were not flight attendants, and finally an

11. See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroad, 2004).

airport that was not an airport. Paradoxically, all of these elements were also what they were taken to be. Falsehood in life is the truth of art — here, a work of art in general and of total art in particular.

It may seem to the modern audience that the act of combining two or any other number of innocent objects, such as an airline ticket, a flower, and a metal chair, is an unimportant matter of aesthetics. However, this is not true. The tickets are associated with airlines, flowers with the gardener, and metal chairs with their vendors and with artisans. Mixing these things together constitutes the creation of a new system of relationships that consequently leads to a violation of the classification system. People are detached from their usual ways of thinking. This is the situation we are dealing with in Lagerfeld's shows. Traditional divisions developed in the Renaissance, which indicated separate disciplines, for example, painting on canvas or fresco, sculpture in the round or relief, were linked in Lagerfeld's overriding artistic idea. The artist unified and combined what had been disconnected and fragmented in today's specialized world of art. The previous division divided the world of artistry from the everyday world, jealously guarding the uniqueness of art. But changes in classification lead to changes in thinking, as new artistic strategies bring about changes in thinking about art and culture. In the wake of the avant-garde trends of the last century, it is easier for us today to accept combinations, even the least obvious and most surprising. These combinations are not just an innocent matter of aesthetics. Here is the *Gesamtkunstwerk* of the 21st century, in which Lagerfeld, with artistic freedom and ideological courage, combined various materials, elements of scenery, and ideas of the modern world with a work of art: his fashion show.

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Leszek Sosnowski: Jagiellonian University in Kraków (Poland)

✉ leszek.sosnowski@uj.edu.pl

He is a professor and (habilitated) doctor conducting scientific and didactic activity at the Institute of Philosophy, Jagiellonian University. He is the director of the research project *The Electronic Archives of Roman Ingarden*, financed by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of Republic of Poland. Founder and editor-in-chief of the philosophical-aesthetic quarterly *The Polish Journal of Aesthetics*. Co-author of the *Dictionary of the Philosophical Concepts of Roman Ingarden* (2001). His research interests include phenomenology, analytic philosophy and their relations with modern art.